

Chris Sununu

Christopher Thomas Sununu (/səˈnuːnuː/; born November 5, 1974) is an American Republican politician, businessman, and engineer serving as the 82nd governor of New Hampshire since January 2017. Sununu was a member of the New Hampshire Executive Council from 2011 to 2017.

Sununu earned a bachelor's degree in civil and environmental engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He has served as chief executive officer of the Waterville Valley Resort in Waterville Valley, New Hampshire. Sununu is a son of former New Hampshire Governor and White House Chief of Staff John H. Sununu, and a younger brother of former U.S. Representative and Senator John E. Sununu.

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Chris Sununu



82nd Governor of New Hampshire

Incumbent

Assumed office

January 5, 2017

Preceded by Maggie Hassan

Member of the New Hampshire Executive Council from the 3rd district

In office

January 3, 2011 – January 3, 2017

Preceded by Beverly Hollingworth

Succeeded by Russell Prescott

Personal details

Born Christopher Thomas Sununu
November 5, 1974
Salem, New Hampshire, U. S.

Political party Republican

Spouse(s) Valerie Sununu (m. 2001)
[1]

Relatives John H. Sununu (father)

External links[John E. Sununu \(brother\)](#)**Residence** [Bridges House](#)**Education** [Massachusetts Institute of Technology \(BS\)](#)**Website** [Government website \(http://governor.nh.gov\)](#)

Early life and education

Family

Sununu, one of eight siblings,^[2] was born and raised in Salem, New Hampshire.^[3] He is a son of Nancy (Hayes) and former Governor of New Hampshire and White House Chief of Staff John H. Sununu. His father's paternal ancestors came to the [United States](#) from the Middle East around the start of the 20th century, while his paternal grandmother was born in El Salvador to a family of Lebanese Greek Orthodox Christians that had settled in Central America at the turn of the century. His father's paternal ancestry is Lebanese and Palestinian from the Greek Orthodox community in Jerusalem. Despite the family's emigration from Jerusalem, some members of the family were from Beirut, in what is today Lebanon. His father, John, was born in Havana, Cuba. His paternal grandfather, also named John, was born in the United States, and most of the last two generations of Sununus were also born in the United States.^[4] His mother's ancestors include immigrants from [Ireland](#), as well as [Scotland](#) and [England](#).^[4] When he took office as governor, Sununu was sworn in with a Greek Orthodox New Testament belonging to his family.^[5]

Chris Sununu is a younger brother of [John E. Sununu](#), a former U.S. Senator and U.S. Representative.^[2]

Education

- [Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology](#), Fairfax County, Virginia, graduated 1993.^[6]
- [Massachusetts Institute of Technology](#), Cambridge, Massachusetts, BS in Civil/Environmental Engineering, graduated 1998.^[7]

Early career

Engineering

From 1998 to 2006, Sununu worked as an environmental engineer designing systems and solutions for cleaning up waste sites. He specialized in soil and groundwater remediation, wastewater treatment plants, and landfill designs.

Business

- In 2010, Sununu led a group of investors in the buyout of [Waterville Valley Resort](#) where he worked as Chief Executive Officer, employing over 700 people in the White Mountains region. Sununu led an aggressive expansion effort of the ski resort in cooperation with the [United States Forest Service](#). The resort offers skiing, golf, tennis, mountain biking, and an ice arena.^[8]
- From 2006 to 2010, Sununu was an owner and director of Sununu Enterprises, a family business and strategic consulting group in [Exeter, New Hampshire](#). It focuses on local, national and international real estate development, venture technologies and business acquisitions.

New Hampshire Executive Council

Sununu was a member of the New Hampshire Executive Council from 2011 to 2017.^[9]

10-Year Highway Plan

On December 16, 2015, the Governor's Advisory Commission on the Intermodal Transportation (GACIT) presented the 10-Year Plan for 2017-2026 to the Governor of New Hampshire.^[10] Executive Councilor Sununu, as a voting member of GACIT, helped develop the blueprint which "aggressively addressed financial constraint, assuming federal funding of about \$160 million per year."^[11]

Ward Bird

In 2010, Sununu joined the other four Executive Council members in voting unanimously to release Ward Bird from his mandatory three to six-year prison sentence for threatening another person with a gun. The council voted to grant a full pardon to the Moultonborough farmer, who was convicted of brandishing a gun at a woman who trespassed on his posted property in 2008. But Lynch, who has never granted a pardon during his tenure in the Corner Office, vetoed the measure, saying the judicial system had given Bird's case a thorough review and he would not undermine it. The council then immediately voted to commute Bird's sentence, and Lynch let that vote stand.^[12]

Managed Medicaid

In 2011, Sununu led a series of public hearings to review proposals for Managed Medicaid, a program to help New Hampshire Medicaid recipients to coordinate their health care.^[13] It also helps Medicaid recipients with chronic diseases like diabetes, asthma, obesity, and mental illness. Through this program, Medicaid recipients have wellness and prevention programs as a part of their Medicaid benefit.

In 2014, a 300-page, \$292 million amendment to the state's Medicaid program came before the Executive Council only two hours before the scheduled vote. Republicans Joseph Kenney and Sununu urged the governor and other Democrats present not to vote for the contract, but lost the vote 3-2, along party lines.^[14]



Sununu at a 2016 gubernatorial candidate forum steered by former Utah Governor Jon Huntsman Jr. and former Connecticut Senator [Joe Lieberman](#).

Governor of New Hampshire

Elections

2016

In the general election, Sununu defeated Democratic nominee [Colin Van Ostern](#), 48.8% to 46.6%.^[15]

2018

In the general election, Sununu was re-elected, defeating Democratic nominee Molly Kelly, 52.8% to 45.7%.^[16]

Sununu was endorsed by the New Hampshire Troopers Association, New Hampshire Police Association, Professional Fire Fighters of New Hampshire, National Federation of Independent Businesses, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 104. In his bid for re-election, he was also endorsed by numerous New Hampshire news outlets, including: *The Portsmouth Herald*, *The Union Leader*, *The Eagle-Tribune*, *Nashua Telegraph*, *Foster's Daily Democrat*, *Exeter News-Letter*, *Seacoast Online*, and the *Hampton Union*.

2020

On May 14, 2019, Sununu announced that he would seek a third term as governor, rather than challenging incumbent Democratic Senator Jeanne Shaheen in the 2020 election.^[17]

Tenure

Sununu was sworn in as Governor for a two-year term on January 5, 2017. Sununu was sworn in for his second term as Governor on January 3, 2019.^[18]

In 2018, Sununu announced the nationwide launch of his Recovery Friendly Workplace Initiative to engage employers and empower workplaces to provide support for people recovering from substance use disorder. More than 40,000 employees in the Granite State work for a designated Recovery Friendly Workplace. In October 2018, Sununu introduced the State's new "hub and spoke model" for addiction recovery. The model includes nine regional hubs (located in Berlin, Concord, Dover, Hanover, Keene, Laconia, Littleton, Manchester, and Nashua) which coordinate with local "spokes" to provide addiction recovery services. Hubs receive \$9 million a year in funding, stemming from \$45.8 million in federal aid to combat the state's opioid epidemic.^[19] In March 2019 Governor Sununu announced that an additional \$12 million had been allocated to New Hampshire to fight the opioid epidemic.^[20]

On May 3, 2019, Sununu vetoed a bill that would have repealed the death penalty. He signed the veto at a community center named after Michael Briggs; as drafted, the bill would not have applied to Michael Addison (who killed Briggs in 2006). The veto was overridden.^[21]

Political positions

Sununu is considered by some to be a moderate Republican.^[22] He has vetoed 57 bills, including 40 bipartisan bills in 2019.^[23] One bill vetoed by Sununu would have raised solar net metering caps.^[24] He is in favor of tax cuts, but takes liberal positions on some social issues.^[25] *On The Issues*, a non-profit and non-partisan organization which tracks politicians' positions, considers Sununu to be a "Moderate Libertarian Conservative."^[26]

Economic and fiscal positions

Sununu nominated 27 New Hampshire 'opportunity zones' to receive federal tax breaks for low income areas.^{[27][28]} These included Waterville Valley, an affluent town dominated by the Sununu family's Waterville Valley Resorts. The family later expanded their investment in the resort, allowing them to "defer paying taxes on those gains for seven years and get a 15% discount on the tax liability. In addition, they could avoid paying taxes on any future capital gains from the resort if they hold on to it for a decade". The governor claimed that there was no conflict of interest, even though many other towns were far more qualified for the investment incentives encouraged by the program.^[29]

Sununu has supported tax cuts for businesses and a reduction in property taxes.^[30] Following the 2018 mid-term elections, in which Democrats regained control of the New Hampshire State Legislature, Sununu vowed to veto their proposal to create a state income tax, as well as several other new taxes and fees. Regarding health care policy, Sununu signed a bill making it easier for medical facilities to be licensed to treat veterans.^[31] Sununu also opposed the Senate's Republican health care plan in 2017, citing that the proposal would negatively impact Medicaid and addiction recovery services in the state.^[32]

He supports legislation to provide state-funded "school choice vouchers to disadvantaged and low-income students"; such vouchers could be used at religious and private schools.^[33] Following the 2018 mid-term elections, in which Democrats regained control of the New Hampshire State Legislature, Sununu vetoed a bill to establish a paid family leave policy for New Hampshire.^[34]

Energy

In late June 2018 and again on June 4, 2019, Sununu vetoed New Hampshire Senate Bill 446, which would have increased the size limit for renewable energy projects participating in net metering from 1 megawatt (MW) to 5 MW. A veto override vote held in 2018 by the New Hampshire House of Representatives failed to achieve a two-thirds majority in favor of the override.^[35]

In a statement about his veto of Senate Bill 446 (and a separate bill, Senate Bill 365), Sununu said the bills would collectively cost New Hampshire electric ratepayers (consumers) around \$100 million over three years. "While I agree that expanding net metering could be a benefit to our state, Senate Bill 446 would cost ratepayers at least \$5 to \$10 million annually and is a handout to large-scale energy developers," Sununu said. "These immense projects should use incentives already available and compete on their own merits."^[35]

Social positions

On abortion, Sununu says that he is not opposed to abortion rights, but does not support taxpayer funding for abortions and supports the ban on partial-birth abortion.^[36] In 2015, as a member of the New Hampshire Executive Council, he voted to defund Planned Parenthood.^[37] He later reversed his position and voted to restore the funding.^[38] In 2018, he said "I'm pro-choice. I support Roe v. Wade."^[39] Sununu had supported other contracts with Planned Parenthood.^[40]

He vetoed a bill that would ban the public from carrying firearms on school playgrounds.^[41]



Sununu being interviewed on the Rich Girard radio program, February 2016

Regarding immigration, Sununu said he would refuse to send the National Guard to the border to enforce Trump's 'zero-tolerance' policy in regard to undocumented immigrants.^[42] However, during a 2016 gubernatorial debate, Sununu stated he opposed the settling of 10,000 Syrian refugees in the United States.^[43]

Sununu is seen as supportive of LGBT rights; he said that he does not get involved with the state's GOP platform issues and he was a speaker at an event for the Log Cabin Republicans, a GOP political action committee that supports same-sex marriage and other gay rights.^[44] In 2018, Sununu signed into law two bills intended to protect the rights of the LGBT community. He signed a bill prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity as well as a bill to ban 'conversion' therapy from being used on minors.^[45] In 2019, he allowed a bill to become a law without his signature that created a non-binary gender option for drivers' licenses.^{[46][47]}

Sununu is opposed to legalizing marijuana. In December 2018 he stated he would “absolutely” veto legislation “regardless of what the language looks like.”^[48] Speaking about the environment, in 2020 Sununu joined Democrats in supporting permanent funding for conservation efforts in the US, and particularly in New Hampshire.^[49]

Personal life

Sununu is an active skier and rugby player and, in 1998, completed a five-month through-hike of the Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia.^[50] He lives with wife, Valerie, and their three children, Calvin, Edie, and Leo, in Newfields, New Hampshire.^[51]

Electoral history

Executive Council 1st Term

In 2010, Sununu (R) defeated incumbent Executive Councilor Beverly Hollingworth (D) by a margin of 53,053 to 41,875,^[52] or 55.9% to 44.1%.

Executive Council 2nd Term

In 2012, Sununu (R) defeated Bill Duncan (D) 75,856 to 55,432,^{[52][53]} or 55.2% to 40.3%, with 4.5% going to Libertarian candidate Michael Baldassarre.

Executive Council 3rd Term

In 2014, Sununu (R) defeated Robin McLane (D) 61,601 to 38,420,^{[54][55]} or 61.6% to 38.4%.



In 1998, Chris Sununu completed a five-month through-hike of the Appalachian Trail from Maine to Georgia.

New Hampshire's gubernatorial election, 2016 ^[15]				
Party		Candidate	Votes	%
	Republican	Chris Sununu	354,040	48.84%
	Democratic	Colin Van Ostern	337,589	46.57%
	Libertarian	Max Abramson	31,243	4.29%
Total votes			724,863	100.00%
	Republican gain from Democratic			

New Hampshire gubernatorial election, 2018 ^[56]				
Party	Candidate	Votes	%	±
Republican	Chris Sununu (incumbent)	302,764	52.78%	+3.94%
Democratic	Molly Kelly	262,359	45.74%	-0.83%
Libertarian	Jilletta Jarvis	8,197	1.43%	-2.88%
<i>n/a</i>	Write-ins	282	0.05%	-0.23%
Total votes		'573,602'	'100.0%'	N/A
	Republican hold			

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External links

- [Office of the Governor \(http://www.governor.nh.gov/\)](http://www.governor.nh.gov/) official government site
- [Chris Sununu for Governor \(http://www.chrissununu.com/\)](http://www.chrissununu.com/) official campaign site
- [Chris Sununu \(https://curlie.org/Regional/North_America/United_States/New_Hampshire/Governments/Executive/Governor_Chris_Sununu\)](https://curlie.org/Regional/North_America/United_States/New_Hampshire/Governments/Executive/Governor_Chris_Sununu) at Curlie
- [Appearances \(https://www.c-span.org/person/?chrissununu\)](https://www.c-span.org/person/?chrissununu) on C-SPAN
- [Councilor Christopher T. Sununu \(https://web.archive.org/web/20130606072731/http://www.nh.gov/council/district3/biography.html\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20130606072731/http://www.nh.gov/council/district3/biography.html) at the New Hampshire Executive Council, District 3, archived
- [ABC News article on Sununu \(https://web.archive.org/web/20130921060732/http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2013/04/the-next-sununu-like-father-like-son/\)](https://web.archive.org/web/20130921060732/http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2013/04/the-next-sununu-like-father-like-son/)

Party political offices		
Preceded by Walt Havenstein	Republican nominee for Governor of New Hampshire 2016, 2018, 2020	Most recent
Political offices		
Preceded by Chuck Morse Acting	Governor of New Hampshire 2017–present	Incumbent
U.S. order of precedence (ceremonial)		
Preceded by Mike Pence <i>as Vice President</i>	Order of Precedence of the United States Within New Hampshire	Succeeded by Mayor of city in which event is held
		Succeeded by Otherwise Nancy Pelosi <i>as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives</i>
Preceded by Henry McMaster <i>as Governor of South Carolina</i>	Order of Precedence of the United States Outside New Hampshire	Succeeded by Ralph Northam <i>as Governor of Virginia</i>

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